

3 ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1

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Aerial spying detailed by former city resident

Jefferson City has produced its share of successful people in the last 50 years, but none of the group knows as much as Dino Brugioni.

Brugioni (pronounced Brewsh-oni) probably isn't any smarter than some of the rest. However, the 1939 graduate of Jefferson City High School is privileged to a host of inside information because he is a senior official and an aerial reconnaissance expert with the Central Intelligence Agency.

Brugioni returned home last week to discuss some of the non-classified details of his work with students at both local high schools and to make a presentation at the Missouri Limestone Producers Association convention at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Born at Bevier in Macon County in 1921, Brugioni was just one of the thousands from Central Missouri who was called to fight during World War II. By the war's end, he had flown 66 bombardment missions and more than 100 reconnaissance missions over North Africa, Italy, France, Germany and Yugoslavia.

It made him a natural for the new governmental agency which began forming in 1947 — the CIA.

While in Jefferson City, Brugioni detailed for

students the development of aerial intelligence photography by the CIA, its importance and the role it played during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Everybody sat back and thought the world would return to peace after the war ended. But when the Russians exploded a nuclear bomb in 1949 and followed up with a thermonuclear explosion in 1953, U.S. officials were shocked back into reality, he said.

Brugioni said the need for knowing what and how much the Russians had and where it was located became even more important when the U.S. learned that the Russians had developed a plane capable of delivering these nuclear bombs to the U.S. mainland.

This is when a team of reconnaissance experts, including Brugioni, was formed to develop the U-2 operation.

They immediately faced some problems. Reconnaissance photography had played an important role during World War II, but it was not a specialized art. It consisted of inserting cameras in place of guns on fighter planes and in the place of bomb bays on the bombers.

Now, however, the need was for something more sophisticated. Instead of flying over battlefields and cities at relatively low altitudes in wartime, the CIA needed a plane that could fly extremely high for long periods (up to 12 hours) over the Soviet Union. The film created a problem, too, because the celluloid backing on the film would freeze and crack at higher altitudes.

Brugioni and the others turned to U.S. technology to solve the problem.

A new thin-based plastic film was developed. It permitted up to 6,000 feet of film to be wound on a spool. A new "panoramic camera" was developed along with a new computer-ground lens which produced photographs with five times more detail.

But they still needed something to carry the new film and cameras aloft. So they asked for and got a plane which would carry a man and the equipment at 70,000 feet for 10 to 12 hours.

Brugioni impressed students with an example of how much he could learn about Jefferson City and Central Missouri by flying at an altitude of 14 miles and taking photographs.

He said a U-2 flight from Washington D.C. to Phoenix, Ariz., would photograph everything in a 300-mile-wide swath through Missouri from north of Macon southward to Springfield. Brugioni said he could look at the photo and identify every object on the ground that was at least three feet wide.

It would be easy, he said, to tell that Jefferson City was an administrative center because of the Capitol and office buildings.

But he could also pick out the factories by following railroad spurs leading to big buildings; the prisons by picking out the walls and guard towers; the fact that Missourians eat beef,

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